

IN THE CLAIMS:

Claim 1-28. (Canceled)

29. (Currently amended) A method of removing a portion of a concrete surface, the method comprising:

providing a beam of laser light;

irradiating a location of the surface with the laser light;

~~wherein a shadow mask is used to~~ and mounting a mask to cover a peripheral part of the beam of laser light so as to remove a low power density part of the laser beam that is below a threshold power density for surface removal before the surface location is irradiated.

30. (Canceled)

31. (Currently amended) A method of removing a portion of a concrete surface according to claim 29, [[30]] wherein the mask is a shadow mask which absorbs substantially all of that portion of the laser beam that is below the threshold power density.

32. (Currently amended) A method of removing a portion of a concrete surface according to claim 29, wherein the

[[shadow]] mask is a reflective mask [[wherein]] which
reflects light incident thereon ~~on the mask is reflected by~~
~~the mask.~~

33. (Currently amended) A method of removing a portion of
a concrete surface according to claim 32, wherein the
[[reflection]] reflective mask redirects lower power density
laser light to another low power density portion of the laser
beam to create an additional high power density portion of the
laser beam.

34. (Canceled)

35. (Previously presented) A method of removing a portion
of a concrete surface according to claim 29, wherein the
surface portion is removed by the effect of thermal shock.

36-45. (Canceled)

46. (Currently amended) A method of removing a portion of
a natural stone surface, the method comprising:

providing a beam of laser light;

irradiating a location of the surface with the laser
light; and

~~wherein a shadow mask is used~~ mounting a mask to cover a peripheral part of the beam of laser light so as to remove a low power density part of the laser beam that is below a threshold power density for surface removal before the surface location is irradiated.

47. (Currently amended) A method of removing a portion of a natural stone surface according to claim 46, wherein the mask is a shadow mask which absorbs substantially all of that portion of the laser beam that is below the threshold power density.

48. (Currently amended) A method of removing a portion of a natural stone surface according to claim 46, wherein the ~~[[shadow]] mask is a reflective mask [[wherein]]~~ which reflects light incident thereon ~~on the mask is reflected by the mask.~~

49. (Currently amended) A method of removing a portion of a natural stone surface according to claim 48, wherein the ~~[[reflection]]~~ reflective mask redirects lower power density laser light to another low power density portion of the laser beam to create an additional high power density portion of the laser beam.

50. (Previously presented) A method of removing a portion of a natural stone surface according to claim 46, wherein the surface portion is removed by the effect of thermal shock.